



CRS Parent Connection

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

Volume 17, Number 4



Fall 2009

Donation to Opelika CRS one for the books

The East Alabama Society of Certified Public Accountants wants to make sure that young visitors to the CRS clinic in Opelika have plenty to read.

The group recently gave more than 400 books to the office in east Alabama.

The donation began with a phone call to Sharon Henderson, the parent consultant with Opelika CRS. Amanda Savage, who represents the East Alabama Society, wanted to know if her group could sponsor a book drive for the office.

"I was honored when Amanda called to ask if it would be OK for them to help us fill our bookshelves," said Henderson. "We really only needed a few books, but I thought it would be nice to have the shelves packed."

Two months later, Savage called again to tell Henderson that the organization had completed its drive and would be donating 440 books.

Henderson's initial response?

"Holy cow!"

Her second thought?

"Where in the world am I going to put all those books?"

Because she knew that the donation far exceeded Opelika's needs, she contacted parent consultants throughout the state to see if they needed books for their libraries.

Several responded that they were in desperate need.



Members of the East Alabama Society of CPAs pose with parent consultant Sharon Henderson after donating books to the Opelika CRS office. From left to right, Jessica Pagan, Brad Martin, Nick Wheeler, Henderson, Allison Edge, and Amanda Savage

In the end, Henderson kept about 60 books for her office and shared the rest with other CRS offices around the state.

The donations ranged from pop-up books for babies and young children to novels for teen-agers and young adults.

The East Alabama Society of CPAs, made up of about 175 members, chooses a service project every year, said Savage.

She said the group chose Opelika CRS at the suggestion of one of its members, who was familiar with the office. While participating in a Christmas party for CRS consumers last year, the person noticed that the office didn't have many books on its shelves. She also remembered the staff as friendly and caring. After some discussion, the CPA group decided that they wanted to

do something to help the office.

Savage sent an email to the group's members urging them to participate in the project. Two drop-off points were established, one at the society office and the other at the office of the City of Auburn. Members also were encouraged to bring their donations to monthly meetings.

"We had a goal of 200," Savage said, "but we received twice that amount. Needless to say, we were very happy with the results."

Henderson said that CRS is very grateful for the donation and has a special message for the organization.

"Thank you, East Alabama Society of CPA's, for your very generous contribution," she said.

Inside....

New ACT Clinic.....	3
Cutting Down on Expenses.....	4
Book Review.....	8

Family Voices.....	9
Funderful Times.....	10
Let's YAC About It.....	11



CRS Parent Connection

Editor: Susan Colburn
State Parent Consultant

Layout and design:
Deitrich Curry
Public Information Specialist

Contributing writers:
Becky Fields
Sharon Henderson
Rita Hutcheson-Cobbs
Tammy Moore
Vivian Spears
Odessa Taylor

Address inquiries to:
Susan Colburn
Children's Rehabilitation Service
602 S. Lawrence St.
Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone: (800) 846-3697, (334) 293-7041
Fax: (334) 293-7373
Email: susan.colburn@rehab.alabama.gov

Parent Connection is a complimentary newsletter published by Children's Rehabilitation Service for families of children with special health care needs. The goal of this newsletter is to increase communication and share information about children with special health care needs and their families. The newsletter reflects a family-centered theme throughout and serves as a forum for family members to share information, thoughts, feelings, concerns, etc. Nothing printed or implied in this publication constitutes an endorsement by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

This material is available in alternate formats upon request. Alternate formats include braille, large print or audio tape and may be obtained by calling the phone numbers listed above.

In the provision of services and employment practices, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services does not discriminate on the basis of sex, creed, national origin, religion, race, age or disability.



From the Director's Chair



Hello, Parents and Caregivers,

As we approach the holiday season, I want to express how much the CRS family appreciates you and the trust you place in our staff to provide services to your loved ones. I wish all of you the best at Christmas and in the coming year.

In the summer newsletter, I updated you on the status of our FY 2009 legislative budget allocation. You might recall that our total budget reduction for the 2009 fiscal year was 11 percent, which totaled \$1,514,315. This decrease cut our budget allocation from \$13,766,502 to \$12,252,187. I had hoped to give you more positive news in this newsletter; however, I cannot as ADRS/CRS has been notified of an additional 7 percent cut in the CRS budget for FY 2010. Our initial FY 2010 allocation of \$11,660,252 had already been set at a little less than the prorated level for FY 2009. The additional 7 percent proration – which amounts to nearly \$875,000 – decreased that amount even further, to \$10,785,733. This means that since December 2008, the CRS budget has been reduced by nearly \$2.4 million dollars.

Needless to say, FY 2010 will be a very difficult year for CRS and the other divisions within our agency as we have all suffered through more and more budget cuts over the past year. The CRS promise to you is that any cuts to client services will be a last resort. We are continuing to work to reduce our costs in other ways by cutting controllable operational expenditures such as travel, training and supplies. In fact, we have just decided that we cannot support our staff in attending a conference on the medical aspects of disability that is an important part of staff training and continuing education. A training of this type helps our staff serve you better, but limited funding simply does not allow for these kinds of expenditures at this time.

We will continue to update you on the status of our budget and services throughout FY 2010. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Now, I would like for you to refocus and to take this opportunity to inform you of an update in our care coordination program which will be beneficial to our CRS children and families. Wanda Ross, our care coordination specialist, and Paula Gasser, our nurse coordinator have been busy developing a tool that will be useful to our social workers, nurses and other interdisciplinary staff as they provide care to your children. Here's a quote from Wanda:

"We are currently developing a new CRS Plan of Care to be used by care coordinators in partnership with clients/families to identify needs, develop a plan to address the needs and acknowledge milestones achieved. Our goal is to improve communication between each family, their CRS team, and their primary care provider."

Stay tuned for a complete update on the CRS Plan of Care at your local PAC meetings, from your care coordinator, or possibly in the spring 2010 issue of this newsletter.

Melinda M. Davis
Assistant Commissioner, CRS

Jackson CRS launches new ACT Clinic

For the families of people with disabilities, traveling – particularly long distances – can be very difficult.

To address this issue, the Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) office in Jackson has launched a new Augmentative Communication Technology (ACT) clinic.

The new clinic prevents consumers from having to travel the 70 miles to Mobile to get the assistive technology they need to communicate. Instead, staff members from the Mobile CRS office are now traveling to Jackson to conduct the clinic.

"We're taking the services to the people," said David Savage, a state office administrator with CRS. "It saves families time and money."

The Jackson CRS office held its first ACT Clinic in October and will have the clinic on a quarterly basis.

Mobile staff who participated in the clinic were Shirley Glenn, social worker; Rhonda



Jeff Mega, left, a rehabilitation technology specialist with Montgomery VRS, works with Siedeab Howard at the new Children's Rehabilitation Service Augmentative Communication Technology (ACT) Clinic in Jackson

Boles, occupational therapist; Patti Fassbender, physical therapist; and Maryann Wilkins, speech-language pathologist. Rehabilitation Technology Specialist Jeff Mega drove from his Montgomery VRS office to assist.

Tonya Beech, the Jackson CRS office coordinator, scheduled consumers.

She said her office appreciates the team that came to assist with the clinic.

"We are all very excited that we are able to offer this for our consumers," Beech said. "It's much more convenient for them than making the trip to Mobile."

Families attend self-determination workshop

Families and individuals with special health care needs all across Alabama attended a two-day workshop on self-determination at the Renaissance Hotel in Mobile.

The workshop was sponsored by The Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities, The Arc of Alabama, People First of Alabama, Center for Self-Determination and Imagine Enterprises.

Patricia Carver, of the Center for Self-Determination, explained what it means to be self-determined:

"Self-determination is people who rely on publicly-funded supports having control over and taking charge of their own lives," Carver said. "The best way to do this is to have a system based on these principles."

Besides Carver, Norine Jaloway, executive director of Imagine Enterprises, and Ricky Broussard, who works with Imagine Enterprises, gave presentations on the principles of self-determination. They are:

Freedom- To plan a meaningful life for yourself, with help from your circle of support and freedom to have the opportunity for the



Families learn the principles of self-determination at a two-day workshop in Mobile

same quality of life as anyone else in society.

Authority- To have power and control over decisions in your life.

Support- To set up and control the support you need to have a meaningful life, such as a budget and other resources that are used to support a quality life.

Responsibility- To do as much as you can to support yourself, being careful with your budget, abiding by rules and laws, and giving

back to your community.

Confirmation- To have the right to control decisions about your life, even if you do not communicate like everyone else.

Imagine Enterprises, in collaboration with the Center for Self-Determination, works with organizations and people committed to the values of self-determination.

Sharon Henderson
Parent consultant, Opelika

Money-saving tips for family caregivers: simple steps to cut your expenses

Wildly fluctuating prices for goods and services and a volatile stock market are forcing all of us to rethink the way we spend money. The National Family Caregivers Association receives calls every day from family caregivers who are struggling to make ends meet. It's easy to say, "Cut back on your spending," but when that is what you are already doing, finding additional ways to cut your budget can be a daunting task. Nevertheless, there are simple things that all of us can do to save money each and every day.

Here are a few money-saving ideas. Hopefully, you'll find some that you haven't tried yet. If you have others, please let us know so we can share them across our entire network.

Food Bills

- Clip coupons. The savings can really add up, especially if your grocery store doubles or triples coupons.

- Compare the unit prices of the items you buy. The store brand may be just as good as and considerably cheaper than a brand name. Keep in mind that buying a larger quantity may not always save you money, especially if you are not able to consume the item before it goes bad.

- Apply for the store savings card and use it regularly, especially on the sales items that are advertised by the store each week. If you are purchasing a non-perishable item that can be easily stored and it's on sale, consider stocking up.

- Check the store's discounted items for extra savings. For example, some grocery stores discount their meat, baked goods, and other products significantly if the items have reached their "sell by" date.

- Review each store's weekly circular, comparison shop, and visit the store with the best weekly specials. If you don't receive a store's circular in the newspaper or your mail, you can often view it online. Before you drive across town for one cheaper item, however, remember that the gas you spend to get there may cancel out any savings you hope to get.

- Plan your week's meals ahead of time, as much as possible, and go to the grocery store only once per week. Make a list before doing your grocery shopping for the week and stick to your list. Take a calculator with you to help you stay within your budget.

- Never shop for food when you are hungry.

Electricity Bills

- Make sure your house is properly insulated, including all doors and windows.

- Maintain your heating and cooling system properly and change the air filter on your furnace monthly.

- Change your light bulbs to more energy-efficient bulbs.

- Turn off your computer when you are done using it for the day.

- Turn off the lights in a room when you leave it. Turn off the television if no one is watching.

- Unplug your cell phone charger and your appliances when they are not in use.

- Close the blinds and use fans in warm weather. Open the blinds in cold weather to allow the sun to heat your home. Make sure you close them at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.

General Household Expenses

- If you are paying for premium cable television, Internet and/or phone services, see if you can cut back to a more basic plan with lower monthly fees. If you can't cut back on any of the above but you are receiving more than one service from one provider, inquire about bundling the services together — bundled packages can save you a significant amount of money each month.

- Are you paying for newspapers and magazines you never read? It may be time to cancel your subscriptions.

- Do you pay separate charges for your long-distance service? A calling card can provide significant savings over what your local phone company charges for long-distance calls. If you have a cell phone and long-distance calls are



included in your plan, you don't need another service or a calling card. Just make sure to use your cell phone during your unrestricted hours to avoid additional airtime charges.

- Eat fewer meals out or take advantage of early bird specials or discount days at your favorite restaurants.

- Don't forget that your local library can be a wonderful source of free entertainment, as many now carry extensive collections of movies and television shows. Just make sure you return all your borrowed items on time.

- Use cash instead of credit whenever possible. Studies have shown that when consumers use cash rather than credit, they spend less money.

- Take a brown bag lunch to work as often as possible. Even if you buy a few convenience items at the grocery store to put in your lunch, it should still be cheaper than a fast-food meal (and hopefully healthier, too).

Automobile Expenses

- Review your auto insurance policy and look for areas of possible savings. Raising your deductibles may immediately lower your premiums. Are you receiving all the credits you should be for being a safe driver or having more than one vehicle on a policy? Ask your insurance agent for suggestions on how to save money on your bill.

- Maintain your car's engine, tire pressures, etc. Making sure that your engine is running efficiently and that your tires are inflated properly will save you money on fuel.

- Look for discount days at your local gas stations and try to fill up your tank on those days.

- Combine trips whenever possible.

Medical Costs

- Make sure you take the time to care for yourself — get a physical, a flu shot, your annual dental checkup, etc. While you may feel that you don't have the time or money for these things, it will cost you much more time and money if

(Continued on Page 5)

CRS receives more feedback from families

Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) asked for feedback and got it – in abundance.

At least one family from all but one of the state's 67 counties – more than 1,000 in all – responded to the program's first family survey seeking input about the availability and quality of services in Alabama.

The survey was administered as part of the five-year "needs assessment" conducted by agencies receiving funds through the federal Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant. CRS conducts a needs assessment on the portion of the grant that pertains to the population it serves – children with special health care needs.

Julie Preskitt, special programs coordinator for CRS, said they are pleased with the response.

"The feedback will help us to chart the direction of our program," she said. "We want to provide quality services, but just as importantly, we want to provide the services that families need the most."

The family survey was only a part of the needs assessment for this cycle. The process has included a youth survey, a county-level provider survey, and focus groups.

Though the goal of the needs assessment remains the same, CRS has adapted its means of gathering feedback to better accommodate technology and changing demographics.

The youth and family surveys were available both on line and in Spanish. About 180 youth and families took advantage of the online option, while some 40 people completed the Spanish versions of the surveys for youth and families. CRS also used Facebook groups and partners' websites to publicize the surveys.

Though the data-gathering is complete, the process is far from over, Preskitt said.

"We'll have one more meeting of the Needs Assessment Advisory Group where we'll prioritize needs and establish performance measures based on our findings," she said.

The final report is due July 2010.



VIP Visit

State Rep. Cam Ward, background, R-Alabaster, visits an Augmentative Communication Technology (ACT) Clinic at the Homewood CRS office. He watches as Lillian Harkins, who has congenital quadriplegia, is evaluated for a higher tech communication device.

(Continued from Page 4)

you get sick or experience a dental emergency. A little preventive medicine can save you money in the end.

■ If you are paying a physician or hospital bill out of pocket, don't hesitate to negotiate the bill or to ask for a payment plan. Remember, the insurance companies don't pay the full amount billed.

■ Check all medical bills carefully for errors. If you find a discrepancy on a bill or you don't understand a particular charge, bring it to the attention of the appropriate party immediately.

Medication Costs

■ Investigate prescription assistance programs to see if you and/or your loved one might qualify for reduced cost or free medications. There are numerous programs available to help qualifying patients get the medicines they need free or nearly free. Go to websites such as www.pparx.org (Partnership for Prescription Assistance) to get started. Bring your insurer's formulary to the doctor's office and talk to the doctor about switching your loved one to a generic version of the drug being prescribed or to a lower-cost alternative for a brand-name medication. You can obtain this list from your prescription drug coverage provider.

■ Ask your loved one's doctor for drug samples, especially if he or she is recommending a new drug.

■ Shop around for the best price. Check out reputable U.S. mail order or online pharmacies as well as your local chain stores and neighborhood pharmacies. Compare the prices of 90-day supplies and 30-day supplies and talk with your loved one's doctor about writing the prescription for the more cost-effective quantity.

■ Ask your pharmacist if there are lower-cost alternatives to a specific medication or if there are more cost-effective dosages available. Some pills can be split safely without losing their effectiveness, meaning you can save money by buying fewer pills at the larger strength. Just be sure to check with your loved one's physician to get his or her opinion on and approval of this practice for each medication in question.

Reprinted from Take Care! newsletter by permission of the National Family Caregivers Association, Kensington, MD, the nation's leading organization for all family caregivers. 1-800-896-3650; www.thefamilycaregiver.org.



CRS consumer Catherine Johnston happily plays with a toy

Toys from A to Z

Toys provide all children with an important way to learn about the world, themselves, and their abilities. For children with disabilities, toys may offer an even more important way for the child to gain a variety of life skills through play.

As a parent, you have unique insights into your child's age, interests, skills, and abilities. With that knowledge, you may want to intentionally choose toys that will help your child develop everything from motor, language, and social skills to self-esteem and imagination.

Depending on your child's disability or

developmental delay, you may need to make simple adaptations to make the toy usable. For example, you might want to add foam grips to the handles of toys or crayons for a better grip, or you might add a simple switch to a CD player to allow your child to select music.

Below are some examples of toys and adaptations that can promote your child's skill development.

From Pacer's Early Childhood Connection ©2009. Used with permission from PACER Center Inc., Minneapolis, MN, 952-838-9000. www.pacer.org. All rights reserved.

SKILLS	HELPFUL TOYS	ADAPTATIONS
Physical (gross-motor) skills, such as reaching, crawling, walking, running, climbing, jumping, throwing, catching, and balancing	Balls, pull-push toys, swing sets and slides, wagons, trikes	Add a phone book to your child's push toy or riding toy to weight it down and prevent tipping.
Fine-motor skills, such as handling toys with hands and fingers	Magnetic blocks, writing tools, puzzles, bath toys, lacing and thread sets	Add foam grips to the handles of toys or crayons for a better grasp.
Mental skills, such as problem solving and learning cause and effect	Board games, card games, shape sorters, electronic games, puzzles	Add a simple switch to electronic devices to allow your child to use them. Add knobs to puzzles.
Language skills, such as interacting with others and using words for favorite playthings and activities	Listening games, books, magnetic letters, writing tools	Add page fluffers to books to make the pages easier to turn.
Social skills, such as learning to follow directions, cooperating with others, taking turns, following the rules, and sharing	Games, blocks, play household items	Add visual symbols to the play area to help children communicate their choices and feelings to peers.
Personal skills, such as achieving goals through play and developing self-esteem	Games, art projects, wading pool and water toys, blocks	Add pillows, wedges, or beanbags to help position child for success with play.
Emotional skills, such as experiencing pleasure, bonding with others, and working through feelings during role play	Dress-up clothes, dolls, puppets, stuffed animals	Add Velcro to clothes for easy closure.
Creative and imaginative skills, such as exploring artistic expression or pretending to be a doctor, teacher, parent, firefighter, or person in another profession	Clay, crayons, paints, paper, musical instruments	Add a voice-output device for communicating feelings, interactions, and comments. Add a slant board or easel to hold paper.

Homewood CRS presents 'Soup for the Soul' series

The Homewood CRS office has launched "Soup for the Soul," a series of workshops to provide transition information to the parents of youth between the ages of 14 to 21 years old with special health care needs.

The next session will be Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2010, at 10 a.m. at the Homewood CRS office, 234 Goodwin Crest Drive.

The topic will be "Recipes for Alabama Home and Community-Based Waiver Services: The Elderly and Disabled Waiver."

For additional information about the "Soup for the Soul" transition series, call Tammy Moore at 205-290-4572, (toll free) 1-888-430-4544, or email tammy.moore@rehab.alabama.gov.



Lori Kroeger, program coordinator for ADRS Lakeshore, speaks at the first 'Soup for the Soul'

A proclamation:

President declares November National Family Caregivers Month

The true strength of the American family finds its roots in an unwavering commitment to caring for one another. In difficult times, Americans come together to ensure our loved ones are comfortable and safe. Whether caring for a parent, relative, or child, our Nation's caregivers selflessly devote their time and energy to the well-being of those they look after. During National Family Caregivers Month, we honor the individuals providing essential services to family members who could not otherwise look after themselves.

Caregiver support is at the heart of my Administration's commitment to assisting our Nation's families. Currently, a variety of programs and services offer help and encouragement to family caregivers. The National Family Caregiver Support Program and the Lifespan Respite Care Act include important

resources for caregivers of children and adults, with opportunities to receive much-needed assistance and take part in support programs with other families. These programs allow individuals to remain with their families for as long as possible while helping to ensure the wellness of participating care providers.

My Administration's dedication to caregivers is also embodied in our efforts to develop policies to support workers trying to manage their responsibilities on the job and at home. Families are best able to care for their loved ones when they can take time away from work without fear of losing their job or their income. We all have roles to play, including employers, by providing paid leave, flexible work arrangements, and other programs when feasible, to help ensure that caregivers are able

to successfully meet their work and household responsibilities.

Every day, family caregivers assist loved ones with tasks ranging from personal care and homemaking, to transportation and financial assistance. As the foundation of America's long-term care system, these individuals give millions of Americans the peace of mind and security that only family can provide.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 2009 as National Family Caregivers Month. I encourage all Americans to pay tribute and support those who are caring for their family members, friends, and neighbors in need of assistance.

Please add me to your newsletter mailing list.

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Clip and mail to
Susan Colburn
Children's Rehabilitation Service
602 S. Lawrence St.
Montgomery, AL 36104



Book Review:

“Breakthrough Parenting for Children with Special Needs”

“Breakthrough Parenting for Children with Special Needs” covers it all from “A to Z” – from advocacy to “zero to 3”! The author, Judy Winter, really gets down to where the rubber meets the road, mapping out a practical and proven approach for parenting children with special needs.



Some advice she gives includes “the world is your child’s oyster,” dream dreams, envision the best outcome, listen to your child, see the child’s strengths and abilities, access needed supports, and shoot for the moon!

I really appreciated the chapter entitled “No Labels, Yes Hope.” It is about changing the focus – yours first, then that of those around you – from disability to ability.

The book also addresses people-first language. We must all realize how our actions as well as our words affect the perceptions of others. Your child is a person first, not his or her disability.

You will find everyday tips for family, marriage, and siblings such as planning a trip to the movies, planning a vacation and even planning wills and special needs trusts. Read on and learn how to access services and advocate for needs throughout the lifespan – from early intervention throughout the school years all the way to the road to independence.

You won’t be left out to dry either! The book is brimming with great resources and being a “resource junkie,” I REALLY appreciate that!

When you finish this book you will want to pick it back up now and again as your child transitions through life. When you finish, you will be armed with tips, resources, concrete applications, insight, and optimism for the future of your child. Check it out!!

Tammy Moore

Parent consultant, Homewood



Coat Giveaway

Ayanna Hutcherson shows off her new coat last year after participating in the Tuscaloosa CRS office’s ‘Coats for Kids Project: Warming the Hearts of Families.’ The Tuscaloosa CRS office will hold another coat giveaway this autumn and winter season. If your child is in need of a coat, please feel free to contact your care coordinator. There are more than enough coats to give away.

Offices enjoy wheelchair washes

We had a great day at the Halloween wheelchair wash in Opelika. Students from Southern Union College washed a record-setting eight chairs.

The students also conducted a washing demonstration, including a blue light box where the kids were able to see germs on their hands. Afterwards, they were running for the bathroom sinks.

In total, 18 kids participated. We gave away light-up Halloween T-shirts and sweatshirts. Participants were also given orange and blue backpacks to fill with handouts about the flu and hand washing. The kids also received a coupon for a free meal at Golden Corral. We had a wonderful time.

Sharon Henderson

Parent consultant, Opelika

A wheelchair wash was held recently at the Selma Children’s Rehabilitation Service office.

Approximately 30 people attended the event, which featured entertainment, educational activities and refreshments for consumers and their families. School supplies were also given to those in attendance.

Steve Powell and Randy Holcomb of National Seating and Mobility, along with Emily Williams, of Gulf Coast Rehab, and physical therapist Mandy Maguire performed their work of cleaning and tuning the wheelchairs. Entertainment and education information were provided by Care Ambulance, the Selma Police Department, Taylorville Entertainment Center, ALLKIDS, and Kernard Sears.

Event participants were served snow cones and snacks by Halei Moss and Charle’a Smith.

We thank everyone for the part they played in making the wheelchair wash a fun and successful event.

Odessa Taylor

Parent consultant, Selma



Family Voices announces centers for family-to-family health information

Family Voices of Alabama has been awarded a grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau to increase our services to the families in Alabama by establishing a Family-to-Family Health Information Center (F2F HIC). F2F HICs are family-led organizations that help families of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) and the professionals who serve them. Because the health care needs of CYSHCN are chronic and complex, parents and caregivers are often challenged with finding the resources to provide and finance health care for their children.

How is the F2F HIC staffed?

Our F2F HIC is staffed by three parents who each have children or youth with special health needs. As parents, they have traveled through the maze of services and programs designed to help CYSHCN, so they understand the issues that families face. They will provide advice, offer a multitude of resources, and tap into a network

of other families and professionals for support and information. Family Voices, through the National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships, provides technical assistance, training, and connections to other F2F HICs and partnering organizations.

What does the F2F HIC actually do?

Through this grant, Family Voices of Alabama will:

- present information, training, technical assistance and peer support to families of CYSHCN, as well as those who serve them,
- mentor families through one-to-one contact by toll-free telephone (877-771-FVOA [3862]),
- provide information and resources to families through our website (www.familyvoicesal.org),
- nurture collaboration between families and professionals in the state,
- assist families in making more informed

decisions about their children's health care and being better able to participate in systems-building activities in their communities and states.

- offer training for families on advocacy and family/professional partnerships,
- distribute tip sheets highlighting strategies for collaboration between families and professionals in the state, and
- integrate the philosophy of family-centered care, family/professional partnership, and cultural competence throughout all activities.

How can I get more information?

Contact us:

Telephone: 877-771-FVOA (877-771-3862)

Website: www.familyvoicesal.org

Mail: 1050 Government St., Mobile, AL 36604-2404

CDC launches portal to help parents find information

We are proud to announce that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has created "Parent Portal" to help parents find information to give their children healthier, safer lives.

Located at www.cdc.gov/parents, the CDC site organizes and presents information for parents and provides resources from across CDC, all in one location, making it easier for parents to find what they are looking for.

Parent Portal is a great source for credible, accurate information to help parents raise healthy kids and provide a safe home and community.

It also is a resource for information on diseases and conditions and developmental milestones and schedules.

In addition, the site includes information on physical activity, diet, physical and mental

health, injuries and violence, peer relationships, and a special section on risk behaviors geared for the parents of teens.

We hope you will share this information within your organization and with your constituents.

To place a link on your website to help raise awareness of the CDC Parent Portal, visit www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/.

For information about Family Voices, please contact the Alabama state coordinators, Susan Colburn 334-293-7041, susan.colburn@rehab.alabama.gov or Jerry Oveson 251-438-1609, oveson@bellsouth.net.

Funderful Times – *Holiday Fun*

The holidays are fast approaching. Can you believe it?

The tree is up, with lights on it and adorned with ornaments and decorations from 28 years of marriage, including 23 years with children. Through the years, I've kept everything from paper decorations to bread ornaments too!

Each year, the grandparents give us all things to hang on the tree to remember that particular year. This year we are planning to decorate one tree in our home in a United States Reserves theme. We want to not only remember those serving our country, but also my father, who passed away in August. What a special way to keep someone in your thoughts – especially through the holidays.

What about your family? Do you plan special decorations or events for the holiday season? Will you plan a stay-cation for you and your family this holiday season?

Our family loves the musical opportunities around the Christmas holidays. We visit the Botanical Gardens in Huntsville for their display of lights, which features music throughout the tour. We pick up hot chocolate (and sometimes carry our own) and sip as we ride. We also attend two programs. One, of secular value, includes the tales of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." The other, called "The Living Christmas Tree," includes old Christmas hymns. We also spend an entire day in December baking cookies, breads, and treats to give to our friends and neighbors for the holidays.

If you have read many of my articles or blogs, you know that I love arts and crafts. Scrapbooks, rubber stamps, paper, fabric, beading and yarn are my favorite media.

I find wonderful ideas on various family friendly websites. We gather supplies and create items for those who are homebound or living in nursing homes. We give them a special handmade gift to let them know someone is thinking of them. Your local church or school can provide a list of people who may not receive anything for the holidays.

One year, we collected toboggans and



Rita enjoys last year's holiday with her extended family

gloves for the local elementary school to give to students in need. As you're considering this sort of activity, don't forget those who are serving the armed forces! They love care packages, too!

Whatever the holiday season holds, take pictures of your family working together, volunteering, or sharing the holidays with someone who doesn't have family. Develop the photos or print them on your computer, place them in a handmade photo album using construction paper, blank paper, string, a hole punch and stick glue. Fold the construction paper in half along with the blank white paper (you will want several sheets for this project). Punch a hole along the outside spin in two places, shaped in half-moons. Take the string, run it through both holes and tie on the outside of the newly made scrapbook. Then add the photos, write a note under each photo, decorate the front, and put the date on the outside. Then you have your perfect album of memories and fun.

Baking is something else I enjoy during the holiday season. I make lots of pumpkin items,

from breads to pies to snack bars. I don't really like pumpkin, but it flows through the activities of the season. It is a symbol of what was, what is, and what is yet to come. In October, we use a pumpkin as decoration. In November, with the straws of dried corn stalks and hay bales, it is a symbol of Thanksgiving. In December, it is scraped and used for various baking projects. The delicious smell permeates the house and unites all of the holidays of the fall and winter.

Just like the use of the pumpkin, you can create your own holiday traditions that cost little or nothing. Have a "Grinch Party." If you don't already have it, rent it, "White Christmas," or another holiday-themed film and invite friends or other children over to enjoy this time together. Just being with others over the holidays cheers the soul and lifts the spirits.

From our family to yours, a blessed holiday season filled with love, laughter, happiness, and joy.

Merry Christmas.

Rita Hutcherson-Cobbs

Parent



Let's YAC About It

YLF applications open to juniors and seniors

If you are a high school junior or senior between the ages of 17 and 21 with disabilities, you may be eligible to participate in the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF).

Last year, 29 students participated in the five-day event at Troy University designed to provide students with disabilities the opportunity to develop leadership skills, help make their educational and career goals true realities, and become leaders in society. The event promotes independence and self-advocacy and offers peers with common challenges and experiences the opportunity to learn from each other and network with other students around the state.

The event is sponsored by the Alabama's

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, a program of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), and Troy University.

Throughout the educational and motivational forum students hear from guest speakers who address topics such as disability rights laws, innovations in technology, living independently and resources available at all levels. Social events include a tour of the state Capitol, a dance, a talent show, a pool party and a cook-out.

The delegates are accompanied by a corps of some 40 volunteers comprised of ADRS staff, Troy University staff, Auburn University faculty, Troy University students in the Department of Human Services, Auburn University students

in the Rehabilitation Counseling master's program, certified nurse assistants, registered nurses, and former alumni who return as staff. The former alumni essentially become the leaders of the YLF program.

There is NO COST to attend, but delegates are responsible for their own transportation to and from Troy University.

If you would like to develop your leadership potential and are interested in attending, contact your CRS care coordinator or local parent consultant for an application. You may also contact your VR counselor, job coach or special education teacher at your high school. The application deadline is March 19, 2010.

Becky Fields

Interim coordinator of YLF

Merry Christmas Word Search

S	A	S	N	H	S	G	I	F	T	S	C	V	C	T	C	S	D	T	M
A	L	F	T	L	P	S	L	C	R	O	D	H	Q	A	H	T	O	E	I
W	D	L	E	N	Z	L	Y	J	O	Y	R	A	V	Y	I	H	N	M	S
C	S	I	E	Y	E	Q	O	K	J	I	L	D	S	D	M	G	N	O	T
K	G	B	S	B	N	M	I	D	S	C	S	R	A	H	N	I	E	C	L
H	N	Z	N	I	E	E	A	T	U	U	A	E	B	T	E	L	R	S	E
Z	I	S	O	Q	S	L	M	N	A	R	R	N	R	L	Y	R	L	E	T
J	K	E	I	V	X	A	G	L	R	B	J	E	D	Y	I	O	D	M	O
H	C	T	T	R	S	T	C	N	R	O	E	B	B	Y	R	T	Z	M	E
O	O	P	A	R	W	S	S	E	I	H	K	Z	K	A	C	R	Z	Z	G
L	T	A	R	W	R	E	G	B	O	J	Q	N	C	Y	Y	A	E	E	R
L	S	C	O	M	V	N	S	A	N	T	A	C	L	A	U	S	N	M	N
Y	C	V	C	L	I	E	L	O	P	H	T	R	O	N	K	H	V	E	Z
X	Y	M	E	G	S	H	O	P	P	I	N	G	R	E	C	N	A	R	P
K	Y	H	D	D	A	N	C	E	R	O	H	O	H	O	H	O	E	S	V

BLITZEN

CANDY CANE

CAROLS

CHIMNEY

CHRISTMAS

COMET

COOKIES

DANCER

DASHER

DECORATIONS

DONNER

ELVES

GIFTS

GINGERBREAD

HO HO HO

HOLLY

JINGLE BELLS

JOY

LIGHTS

MERRY

MISTLETOE

MRS. CLAUS

NORTHPOLE

ORNAMENTS

PRANCER

RUDOLPH

SANTA CLAUS

SHOPPING

SLEIGH

STOCKINGS

TREE

WRAP



CRS Parent Connection

Children's Rehabilitation Service
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
602 S. Lawrence St.
Montgomery, AL 36104

**PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID**
Montgomery, AL
Permit No. 109



What's Ahead

Dec. 18, 2009

Jackson CRS Holiday PAC, families can choose to visit and have photographs taken with Santa. For more information, please contact Sharon Beech, 251-246-4025.

Dec. 19, 2009

Fun-day event at Camp Maubila, sponsored by Children's Rehabilitation Service, Kiwanis of Jackson and the Boy Scouts of America Club. Event is for consumers 14 to 20 years old. About 50 boys and girls will be able to participate in scouting events, including roasting hot dogs and marshmallows. For more information, contact Sharon Beech at 251-246-4025.

Dec. 22, 2009

Opelika CRS Christmas Party, contact Sharon Henderson at 334-745-7579 for more details.

Jan. 19, 2010

Soup for the Soul: A Transition Series, "Recipes for Alabama Home & Community-Based Waiver Services Module II: The Recipe for the Elderly and Disabled Waiver," 10 a.m. Event for parents and youth between the ages of 14 and 21. To register, call Tammy Moore at 205-290-4572 or (toll-free) 888-430-4544 or email tammy.moore@rehab.alabama.gov. Registration deadline is Friday, Jan. 15, 2010, at noon.

Local PAC meetings: Check your local CRS office for dates and times of meetings and holiday celebrations in your area.